

Chapter 3

APPLYING FOR ADMISSION

INTRODUCTION

The policy of the PHA is to ensure that all families who express an interest in housing assistance are given an equal opportunity to apply, and are treated in a fair and consistent manner. This Chapter describes the policies and procedures for completing an initial application for assistance, placement and denial of placement on the waiting list, and limitations on who may apply. The primary purpose of the intake function is to gather information about the family, but the PHA will also utilize this process to provide information to the family so that an accurate and timely decision of eligibility can be made. Applicants will be placed on the waiting list in accordance with this Policy.

A. HOW TO APPLY

Families who wish to apply for any of the PHA's programs must complete a written application form when application-taking is open. Applications will be made available in an accessible format upon request from a person with a disability.

- Persons with disabilities may call the PHA to receive an application through the mail or make other arrangements to complete their pre-application.
- Applications will be accepted at the main administrative office and development site management office for all waiting lists.

The application process will involve two phases.

1. The first is the "initial" application for admission (referred to as a pre-application). This first phase is to determine the family's eligibility for, and placement on, the waiting list.

The pre-application will be dated, time-stamped, and referred to the PHA's office where tenant selection and assignment is processed.
2. The second phase is the "final determination of eligibility for admission" (referred as the full application). The full application takes place when the family reaches the top of the waiting list. At this time the PHA ensures that verification of all HUD and PHA eligibility factors is current in order to determine the family's eligibility for an offer of a suitable unit.

B. "INITIAL" APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The PHA will utilize a preliminary-application form (pre-application) for the initial application for public housing. The application is taken in person and the data is entered into the computer. The application may also be mailed to the applicant and, if requested, it will be mailed in an accessible format.

The purpose of the pre-application is to permit the PHA to preliminarily assess family eligibility or ineligibility and to determine placement on the waiting list.

The pre-application will contain questions designed to obtain the following information:

- Names of head and spouse
- Names of adult members and age of all members
- Number of family members (used to estimate bedroom size needed)
- Street address and phone numbers
- Mailing address (If PO Box or other permanent address)
- Annual income
- Source(s) of income received by household members to determine preference qualification
- Information regarding request for reasonable accommodation or for accessible unit
- Social Security Numbers
- Race/ethnicity
- Arrests/Convictions for Drug Related or Violent Criminal Activity
- Previous address
- Names and address of current and previous landlords
- Emergency contact person and address
- Questions regarding previous participation in HUD programs
- Outstanding debts to the PHA
- Prior eviction or termination for assistance
- Illegal use or pattern of abuse of a controlled substance or alcohol
- Subject to lifetime registration requirements under any state sex offender's registration program

Applications will be taken over the phone or in person and data will be entered into the computer.

Duplicate applications, including applications from a segment of an applicant household, will not be accepted.

Pre-applications will not require interviews. Information on the application will not be verified until the applicant has been selected for final eligibility determination. Final eligibility will be determined when the full application process is completed and all information is verified.

Applicants are requested to inform the PHA in writing of changes in family composition, income, and address, as well as any changes in their Preference status. Applicants are also required to respond to requests from the PHA to update information on their application, or to determine their continued interest in assistance.

Failure to provide information or to respond to mailings will result in the applicant being removed from the waiting list. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.)

C. NOTIFICATION OF APPLICANT STATUS

If after a review of the pre-application the family is determined to be preliminarily eligible, they will be notified in writing (in an accessible format upon request, as a reasonable accommodation).

This written notification of preliminary eligibility will be mailed to the applicant by first class mail.

If the family is determined to be ineligible based on the information provided in the pre-application, the PHA will notify the family in writing, state the reason(s), and inform them of their right to an informal hearing. Persons with disabilities may request to have an advocate attend the informal hearing as an accommodation. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.)

D. COMPLETION OF A FULL APPLICATION

All preferences claimed on the pre-application or while the family is on the waiting list will be verified:

- Upon receipt of the preliminary application and prior to placement on the waiting list.

The qualification for preference must exist at the time the preference is verified regardless of the length of time an applicant has been on the waiting list because the preference is based on current status.

Applicants on the waiting list who will be selected in the near future will be sent a letter. (See Chapter on Tenant Selection and Assignment Plan.) The letter will notify the applicant of an application interview and request the applicant to bring all documents which verify all factors to be verified. Factors to be verified will be listed in the letter.

These documents will be used for verification only if third party verification cannot be obtained.

After the preference is verified, when the PHA is ready to select applicants, the PHA will send the applicant a letter notifying him/her of an appointment. Applicants will be required to:

- Complete a Personal Declaration Form prior to the full application interview.
- Complete a full application in their own handwriting, unless assistance is needed, or a request for accommodation is made by a person with a disability. Applicant will then be interviewed by PHA staff to review the information on the full application form.
- Participate in a full application interview with a PHA representative during which the applicant will be required to furnish complete and accurate information verbally as requested by the interviewer. The PHA interviewer will complete the full application form with answers supplied by the applicant. The applicant will sign and certify that all information is complete and accurate.

The full application will be mailed/communicated as requested as an accommodation to a person with a disability.

Requirement to Attend Interview

The PHA utilizes the full application interview to discuss the family's circumstances in greater detail, to clarify information which has been provided by the family, and to ensure that the information is complete. The interview is also used as a vehicle to meet the informational needs of the family by providing information about the application and verification process, as well as to advise the family of other PHA services or programs which may be available.

All adult family members must attend the interview and sign the housing application. Exceptions may be made for adult students attending school out of state or for members for whom attendance would be a hardship.

It is the applicant's responsibility to reschedule the interview if s/he misses the appointment. If the applicant does not reschedule or misses two scheduled meeting(s), the PHA will reject the application.

If an applicant fails to appear for their interview without prior approval of the PHA, their application will be denied unless they can provide acceptable documentation to the PHA that an emergency prevented them from calling.

Reasonable accommodation will be made for persons with a disability who requires an advocate or accessible offices. A designee will be allowed to provide some information, but only with permission of the person with a disability.

If an application is denied due to failure to attend the full application interview, the applicant will be notified in writing and offered an opportunity to request an informal hearing. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.)

All adult members must sign form HUD-9886, "Release of Information," the declarations and consents related to citizenship/immigration status and any other documents required by the PHA. Applicants will be required to sign specific verification forms for information which is not covered by the HUD-9886. Failure to do so will be cause for denial of the application for failure to provide necessary certifications and release as required by the PHA.

Information provided by the applicant will be verified, including information related to family composition, income, allowances and deductions, assets, eligible immigration status, full time student status and other factors related to preferences, eligibility and rent calculation.

If the PHA determines at or after the interview that additional information or document(s) are needed, the PHA will request the document(s) or information in writing. The family will be given seven (7) working days to supply the information.

If the information is not supplied in this time period, the PHA will provide the family a

notification of denial for assistance. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.)

E. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

As families approach the top of the waiting list, the following items will be verified to determine qualification for admission to the PHA's housing:

- Preference verification
- Family composition and type (elderly/non elderly)
- Annual Income
- Assets and Asset Income
- Deductions from Annual Income
- Social Security Numbers of all family members
- Information used in applicant screening
- Citizenship or eligible immigration status
- Criminal History Report

F. FINAL DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

After the verification process is completed, the PHA will make a final determination of eligibility. This decision is based upon information provided by the family, the verification completed by the PHA, and the tenant suitability determination (see Chapter on Eligibility for Admission).

Because HUD can make changes in rules or regulations and family circumstances may have changed during the review process that affect an applicant's eligibility, it is necessary to make final eligibility determination.

The household is not actually eligible for a unit offer until this final determination has been made, even though they may have been preliminarily determined eligible and may have been listed on the waiting list.